There is a perception that to advocate against corporal punishment is to advocate for a situation of no discipline at all. Discipline and corporal punishment are very firmly linked in the minds of adults.

Educators feel very strongly that, when corporal punishment was prohibited in schools, little attempt was made to provide them with opportunities to explore alternatives to corporal punishment and other ways of dealing with disciplinary issues in a classroom setting.

Not being allowed to beat children in a school setting has sometimes resulted in discipline becoming focused on other humiliating consequences for children who misbehave, which in itself can also lead to further violations of children’s rights.

There is a strong sense that “legitimate corporal punishment” and child abuse need to be differentiated from each other, and that the former is acceptable. There is little understanding of the notion that any form of corporal punishment is abusive.

In working with educators, we have found that it is critical that the RAPCAN staff member delivering the workshops has experience as an educator if (s)he is to be taken seriously by other educators.

There is a dearth of understanding, and very little information, on alternatives to corporal punishment and other methods of disciplining children.

Some of the aspects covered by this training will be featured in forthcoming editions of Article 19.

In the near future, RAPCAN is hoping to develop a “Tips for Teachers” booklet on these issues. For further information, consult the RAPCAN website: www.rapcan.org.za.